



Department of State TELEGRAM

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UNCLAS LONDON 2039

DOD FOR ISA/OSD

SUBJECT: COMMENTARY ON ABM DECISION

1. AS MAY BE EXPECTED PRESIDENT'S PRESS CONFERENCE ON 14 MARCH REGARDING ABMS RECEIVED PROMINENT ATTENTION IN BRITISH PRESS OVER THE WEEKEND. MOST OF SATURDAY (15 MARCH) PAPERS FEATURED DECISION PAGE ONE. IN ADDITION THERE WAS EXTENSIVE LEADER AND ANALYTICAL COMMENT, MUCH OF WHICH SYMPATHETIC AND UNDERSTANDING, WHICH IS SUMMARIZED BELOW.

2. TIMES LEADER OF 15 MARCH ON BALANCE SUPPORTS PRESIDENT'S DECISION WHICH TIMES CONCEDES WAS A VERY TOUGH ONE TO MAKE IN ANY EVENT. TIMES ASSERTS THAT THE PRESIDENT HAD TO LOOK AT THE WHOLE ABM QUESTION "IN A BROAD CONTEXT" AND IT IS HERE THAT THE TIMES CONSIDERS BOTH THE U.S. AND THE SOVIETS HAVE CONSEQUENTIAL SECURITY PROBLEM TO DEAL WITH IN TERMS OF

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THREAT OF CHINESE NUCLEAR ATTACK. TIMES CONCLUDES THAT CHINESE DILEMMA POINTS UP THE IMPORTANCE FOR U.S. - SOVIET CONSULTATION AND HOPES THAT ABM DEPLOYMENT CAN BE AGREED AGAINST CHINESE THREAT ON A MINIMUM BASIS AND MEASURES WILL BE TAKEN TO ENSURE THAT ABM SYSTEMS WILL NOT WEAKEN PRESENT "FAIL SAFE PROCEDURES" AND REPLACE "HUMAN DECISIONS, OR HOT LINE WARNINGS BY A COMPUTERIZED HAIR-TRIGGER ON THE NUCLEAR BOMB".

DAILY TELEGRAPH ALIGNS ITSELF IN SUPPORT OF ADMINISTRATION POSITION IN 15 MARCH LEADER WHICH ASSERTS THAT "MR. NIXON HAS ONLY DONE, WITH A MAXIMUM DELAY, ON A MINIMUM SCALE, WHAT RUSSIA HAS NOW BEEN DOING FOR FOUR YEARS". TELEGRAPH TAKES LINE THAT U.S. HAS LEANED OVER BACKWARDS WITH SOVIETS IN SUCH AREAS AS NPT IN HOPE OF "PERSUADING THE RUSSIANS TO PAUSE, AND EVEN SLOW DOWN AND NEGOTIATE" AND DECISION ON ABMS SHOULD PROVIDE CLEAR SIGNAL TO THE SOVIETS THAT ANY U.S. - SOVIET DIALOGUE WILL BE CARRIED OUT FROM POSITION OF GREATER STRENGTH ON U.S. SIDE. SUNDAY TELEGRAPH LEADER CARRIES ON IN SAME VEIN STATING THAT PRESIDENT'S DECISION "HAS COMBINED A MAXIMUM OF BASIC MILITARY SECURITY FOR AMERICA (AND EUROPE) WITH A MINIMUM OF DIPLOMATIC PROVOCATION OF RUSSIA".

IN SUM. SUNDAY TELEGRAPH FINDS FIRST MAJOR DECISION OF NIXON ADMINISTRATION AS "THE AMERICAN EAGLE AT ITS RESPONSIBLE BEST".

3. GUARDIAN LEADER OF 15 MARCH DERIVES SOME COMFORT FROM COMPROMISE IT DETECTS IN PRESIDENT'S DECISION ON ABM ISSUE ON GROUNDS THAT THE EXTREME HARD LINERS ON ABM HAVE BEEN HELD BACK. HOWEVER, GUARDIAN FINDS THAT ANY ABM DEPLOYMENT IS DIFFICULT TO SWALLOW AS THIS IN ITSELF IN THE GUARDIAN'S JUDGMENT IS NOT HELPING TO SLOW DOWN THE NUCLEAR ARMS RACE. THE SUNDAY TIMES CARRIES JOINT ANALYTICAL BY ARTICLE OF CAL MCCRYSTAL AND ROBERT HUNTER WHICH ESSENTIALLY TAKES JAUNDICED VIEW OF ABM DECISION ON GROUNDS THAT "IT IS LITTLE MORE THAN A COVER FOR A SURRENDER TO PRESSURES FROM THE MILITARY-INDUSTRIAL LOBBY".

MCCRYSTAL AND HUNTER SEE IN THE "HALF LOAF" THE PRESIDENT HAS CONFERRED TO THIS LOBBY THE BEGINNING OF A SYSTEM WHICH WILL ULTIMATELY COST ONE HUNDRED BILLION DOLLARS OR MORE. ARTICLE CONCLUDES WITH QUOTATION FROM RESTON OF THE NEW YORK TIMES WHICH STATES THAT "THE INITIALS ABM COULD COME TO STAND FOR 'ADMINISTRATION'S BIGGEST MISTAKE'".

4. FULL TEXT OF FOREGOING PLUS ACCOMPANYING NEWS STORIES BEING POUCHED SEPARATELY. BRUCE

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